REFORMATION TODAY '76

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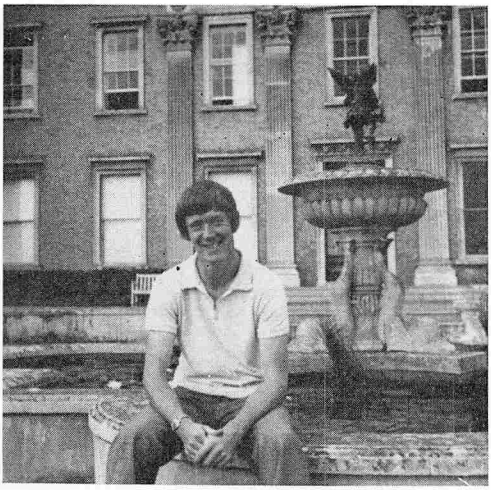
Good news from Bradford-on-Avon inasmuch as Robert Oliver has now become full-time in the work of the ministry. John Alsop (right) shares the teaching ministry at Bradford. The photograph was taken at Pilgrim Hall at the recent conference there.



Colin Richards, minister of the Evangelical Church at Bedford, acted as host-pastor at the Carey Family Conference at Clarendon School.

Editorial

Farel, the fiery Frenchman and the need for the revival of evangelistic preaching

In the last issue of *Reformation Today* priority of place was devoted to George Whitefield. This time the story of William Farel takes up our attention. These men can be likened to John the Baptist. Very few could bear the comparison. To John belonged the privilege of reviving the ordinance of preaching. So rare had the Word become that John was a kind of phenomena. 'All Jerusalem' was prepared to make a days march into the wilderness to hear that which they had never heard before. Thus John prepared the way for the fuller preaching to follow, namely, that of our Lord and his apostles.

Sergius (810) likewise was a voice suddenly arousing the peoples from their deep sleep of spiritual death. Having discovered the writings of Paul he travelled all over Western Asia proclaiming the Gospel to those who had never heard of such a thing. For thirty-four years he alerted the people and urged them to abandon a corrupt Church. Multitudes were converted. Likewise, John Wycliffe in his day revived the apostolic ordinance of preaching and paved the way for greater days to come. In a subsequent generation Whitefield pioneered by making the fields his tabernacle and the open heavens his sounding board. The astonished people had never heard it on that wise and their hearts were turned to God; the children to testify conversion to their parents, and the parents the saving grace of God to their children.

Farel must take his place among men of this pioneering class. He fell like Sampson did upon the Philistines. Their Popish superstitions he smote with almighty vigour. Their ears were set on fire—they were amazed, some horror-struck, some dumbfounded, but others converted. So it is in our secular age. The masses are blind. The peoples wallow in the mires of materialism. Before they drop into the fires of hell may the two-edged sword of the Lord awaken them. Every generation is different and the application of the truth requires its derivation from heaven. One thing is certain and that is that the ordinance of evangelistic preaching must be revived! May it stir us to heed the example of our fathers. What encouragement could exceed that of a revival of evangelistic preaching glorifying the One sending it forth to awaken the world?

Baptism in the Early Church

Stephen Dray, a young man of Reformed Baptist convictions, is studying at the Anglican Trinity College, Bristol. Reformed Baptists both in the U.S.A. and the U.K. are obliged to go to Paedobaptist seminaries for theological training. This means they are subject to infant-Baptist teaching. It will be a day to be celebrated when we have a satisfactory and ideal training institution of our own. In the meantime let us take heart that some of the students aquit themselves well in the matter of baptism.

John Owen's insights into 'Schism'

Bill Payne who has been ministering with great acceptance at the Carey Family Conferences sent us his article over a year ago. Opportunity has been afforded to discuss this important subject in more detail. We are convinced of the correctness of Owen's exposition. Schism is *not* incurred when people in disagreement leave a church. Schism *is* brought about when a dissident group

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Cover picture. *Clarendon School, the scene of the Sixth Carey Family Conference.*

within a local church cause dissension. Schism is when the body is ruptured or torn. It is *not* the amicable and peaceable separation of brethren who agree to differ and separate rather than rupture the body of Christ in its local church expression.

Christian Experience

Ever mindful of the essential need to be balanced in doctrine, experience and practice, the theme of the enjoyment of Christ as seen in the Song of Solomon is presented in this issue.

Correspondence

From John Davison The Lord continues to build his Church in Scotland. The Bible Baptist Church of Stirling was formally constituted with a Covenant Service this month. Dr. Boughman, pastor of Rolling Hills Baptist Church, Texas, brought the charge to the pastor from Acts 20 and 2 Timothy 2. I was enabled to bring the charge to the church from Ephesians 2:19-22. There were 115 present—well filling the hall. Eleven members covenanted together. There are a number of potential members. We were particularly pleased to see Mr. Lyons (senior) join. He is the Council Officer at my office and an ex-army sergeant-major. He was converted on the night of the great baptism in Perth last March when his son, daughter and daughter-in-law were amongst the baptismal candidates and when Tommy preached so forcefully on the cost of discipleship. We had so many wishing to attend from Perth that we had to hire another mini-bus—taking about thirty all told.

From Stuart O'Seanoir of Dublin who objects to the editor's views on Sacralism as follows: My objections to your theories on Sacralism may be expressed in this way: there is no means by which genuine believers can prevent people professing Christianity. There was no way in which the pre-Constantine church could prevent Constantine from making Christianity respectable. Even when genuine believers separate from the professing masses and also excommunicate (or refuse entry to) those whom they judge not genuine Christians, they cannot affect the profession of the expelled, or the self-esteem of the expelled, nor can they (in fact) consign all non-members to Satan, or consider them as non-Christians. The Old Testament gives an example of a nation accepted by God as his people albeit only a remnant was genuine. Sacralism, then, is at some level acceptable to God, although the majority of its professors are not 'known' in the intimate biblical sense by him. Old Testament Sacralism suffered a decline through the division of the Kingdom, the exile, the Greek and Roman invasions, but still a Jewish people continues to our day. And I gather even you find a place for them in God's plan for today.

From Simo of Yugoslavia In the last issue I enjoyed reading especially two articles. (1) The Charismatic Movement. (2) Spurgeon and the Invitation System.

From Ron Edmonds of Long Beach, California The Reformed Baptist Conference on the West Coast proved a real tonic with warm fellowship and rich mutual encouragement. We rejoice in the unity experienced and in the contact with men seeking to plant new churches.

From Jim van Zyl of Pretoria who is writing a thesis on Richard Gurnall's 'The Christian in Complete Armour' My studies through 'Rhodes University' are coming on quite nicely. Gurnall is an absolute mine of information, and with the recent unrest in South Africa is really very topical—for it raises the whole question of just what 'spiritual warfare' is. Is it spiritual in the evangelical sense, or spiritual in the social liberation sense that many religio-terrorists maintain? This is so with many in the Ecumenical movement. The background of the Cromwellian period (during which time Gurnall lived and wrote) is equally fascinating.

This inspiring study of William Farel, the French reformer, is by Victor Cornish, pastor of Faith Baptist Church, Huntsville, Ontario, Canada.

Farel, the fiery Frenchman

TO READ THE LIFE OF WILLIAM FAREL IS TO READ THE HISTORY OF THE Reformation in France and Switzerland. Farel's life is intimately tied in with the lives of the other leading Reformers and he has been rightly called the catalyst of the Reformation. Jaques Courvoisier in his article, *Farel and Geneva,* states:

> There is a fact which strikes one right away when the life of Guillaume Farel is carefully scrutinised. Of all the sixteenth century Reformers, he may be the one who has travelled the farthest and who has come in contact with the greatest number of those individuals who played a significant role in the reform of the Church.[1]

William Farel, 1489-1565, was certainly one of Christ's choice servants. His disposition, as fiery as his piercing eyes and red beard, was remarkably subservient to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Like the Apostle Paul, Farel did not build on another's foundation. He was a ground breaker, God's spearhead in the attack upon the ramparts of Romanism. In him God combined in a remarkable way an undaunted courage, an astonishing insight into the future of the Reformed movement and a self-abnegating spirit which was ever ready to give way to those of greater talent than himself.

Early Days

William Farel was born in a little village near the town of Gap in the southeast corner of France. The year was 1489, and the village nestled in the Alps was Farel's home for 20 years. His parents, of the 'noble' class, were themselves totally steeped in Romanism. Thus young Farel grew up as a zealous advocate of papacy, believing everything the priests said. All the blatant immorality and wickedness of the priests and monks did nothing to swerve the Farel family from Rome.

The age of the enlightenment had broken into the province of Dauphiny as young Farel grew up. With this influence and young William's natural desire for learning, his father's desire that he become a soldier was replaced by a longing for scholarship. Such was the ignorance of educational leaders in his area that William Farel had soon surpassed their ability to teach. It was recommended that he go to University in Paris.

Paris, Lefèvre and conversion

William Farel at 20 years of age left the beautiful hills of Dauphiny for the big city, with high hopes that there among the learned doctors and

students he would find the sincerity and reality of religious belief that had been missing in all his former teachers. Of this period Farel relates how strictly religious he was: 'In truth popery itself was not, and is not, as popish as my heart was.'[2]

His high hopes did not seem to be fulfilled. He was disappointed and dejected at the lack of reverence, the frivolity and the immorality of those who were supposed to be the leaders and students of the Roman faith. His time was spent in learning Latin and also becoming acquainted with Greek and Hebrew.

Not long after his arrival in Paris in 1509, Farel was drawn to a little old man whom he noticed in one of the churches. He tells us later, 'God, seeing me to be such a fearful sinner and infamous idolater, so ordered it that I should meet with another idolater, who surpassed all I had ever seen. Never had I beheld a mass-priest who sang the service with greater reverence, though I had hunted for such people into the very depths of the Carthusian and other monasteries.'[3] This was Dr. Lefèvre. It was not long before these two kindred spirits became fast friends and constant companions. His companionship with one of the leading Doctors of the University of Paris was to bring much recognition to young Farel.

Together these two worshipped before the images and saints of Rome, but in the Doctor was a longing for better things. He, like Farel, but with far greater understanding, knew that things were not what they should be in the church of Rome. Farel later recalled how Lefèvre would say, 'All things are gone wrong, dear William, and someday God will make all things new. You may, perhaps, see it.'[4]

William was still vainly seeking for reality and for God. He found the teachings of the learned doctors totally unsatisfying. Next he tried ancient philosophy but found that also empty. Then, remembering that the Pope had called the Bible the Holy Bible, he decided to read it. What he read appeared to be in total opposition to all he believed so he closed the Book, persuaded that he must be mistaken as to its meaning. Following this sad turning from the light, Farel tried the severity of the Carthusian Monastery, which only deepened his darkness and despair.

God, however, was preparing better things for this young man. Around the year 1512, the light of the glorious gospel was beginning to dispel the darkness from the mind and heart of Dr. Lefèvre. Lefèvre had been studying God's Word, especially the Pauline Epistles. In coming to know God and his truth, Lefèvre initially took a new interest in the lives and stories of the saints. He put before himself the task of arranging all the stories of the saints in order and publishing them each month. He

completed two months when he suddenly realised how utterly false was the worship of these things. He embraced with all his heart the message of the Gospel and began to teach it. Upon learning the truth from Lefèvre, Farel's heart also opened and he too trusted in Christ alone for salvation.

There is some uncertainty historically about this date 1512. D'Aubigné states that Farel's conversion was in that year and he very clearly gives Paris the first place chronologically in the history of the Reformation.[5] There are others who claim that these events did not happen until 1519. Bevan, who supports this latter view, makes an interesting comment that Luther's early writings came to Paris around 1519. However, Farel later said: 'The gospel in France is hindered by the reading of Luther's earlier writings, which admit, in a measure, the adoration of saints and the existence of purgatory. These errors were condemned amongst us some years back, even in the public preaching.'[6] This sounds as if Farel means that what Luther taught had been condemned among the Paris 'reformers' for some time prior to Luther's writing.

Thus it appears that in Paris, the early rays of Reformation light burst forth in the person of Dr. Lefèvre, through him, to some of his young students and even to Margaret, the sister of Francis I, King of France. Lefèvre himself never did entirely break connections with the Roman church. He did not seem to have the boldness to make this final severance, yet unlike such men as Erasmus, Lefèvre did fully embrace the truth and positively proclaimed it even in the face of persecution.

What did Lefèvre believe? Let us listen to him.

> It is God alone who by his grace justifies unto eternal life. There is a righteousness of our own works, and a righteousness which is of grace—the one a thing of man's invention, the other coming from God—the one earthly and passing away, the other Divine and everlasting—the one the shadow and semblance, the other the light and the truth—the one discovering sin and bringing the fear of death, the other revealing grace for the attainment of life.
>
> Oh the unspeakable greatness of that exchange—the Sinless One is condemned and he who is guilty goes free—the Blessing bears the curse, and the cursed is brought into blessing—the Life dies, and the dead live—the Glory is whelmed in darkness, and he who knew nothing but confusion of face is clothed with glory.
>
> They who are saved are saved by the electing grace and will of God, not by their own will. Our election, our will, our working is all in vain; the alone election of God is all powerful! When we are converted, it is not our conversion which makes us the elect of God, but it is the grace, will and election of God which work our conversion.
>
> If thou art a member of Christ's Church, thou art a member of his body; if thou art of his body, then thou art full of the Divine nature, for the 'fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in him bodily'. Oh! if men could but enter into the

> understanding of this privilege, how purely, chastely, and holily would they live, and how contemptible, when compared with the glory within them—that glory which the eye of flesh cannot see—would they deem all the glory of this world.[7]

It was not long after Lefèvre began to proclaim these truths that the last remnants of papacy fell from William Farel. He tells us 'From that moment the Papacy was dethroned from my mind. I began to abhor it as devilish, and the Holy Word of God held the supreme place in my heart.'[8]

The Gospel in France, 1512-1523

During the reign of Francis I the gospel began to be preached in clarity throughout Paris. Encouraged and protected by Margaret; Lefèvre, Farel, the Roussel brothers (Gerard and Arnaud) and several other young men began to study and proclaim the gospel. Farel, during this period, was head of one of the leading Colleges of Theology in Paris. His time was given to studying Greek and Hebrew and the Scriptures, and lecturing at the college. It was at this time that Briconnet, Bishop of Meaux, received the Gospel of Salvation.

But it was not long before persecution began. Louisa of Savoy (the King's mother) and her favourite, Anthony Duprate, Chancellor of the kingdom, were violent enemies of the Reformation. In 1518 they received help in their opposition from Noel Bedier of the Sorbonne (the leading R.C. University), known by the popular name of Beda. For some time the violent opposition of Beda was negated to a degree by the intervention of Francis I. However by 1521 so extreme was the persecution that Lefèvre, Farel, the Roussels and several others were forced out of Paris. They assembled in Meaux a few miles from Paris where Briconnet had for some time been longing for capable gospel preachers.

Meaux for a few years became a centre from which the gospel radiated to surrounding villages and towns. Many of the town folk were awakened. Some began preaching and in a few years faced martyrdom. A college was begun to train pastors and teachers of the word, its motto, 'Sufficient is the Word of God.'[9] Lefèvre began translating the Bible into French. First the four gospels, then the rest of the New Testament. Briconnet himself preached the gospel faithfully and rejoiced to see the Word going forward.

However, this unrestrained advance of truth was not to last. The priests and monks, alarmed at the gospel's success, appealed to Paris, and Beda, not satisfied with having driven the gospel from Paris, now turned his wrath upon Meaux. Charges of heresy were levelled against Briconnet and the other preachers. Briconnet was able to clear himself but he bowed to pressure and forbade the others to preach. Lefèvre also was cleared by intervention from Margaret to Francis I. Farel, however,

had few friends in high places and was forced to leave Meaux. This was in April 1523. Briconnet and Lefèvre again took up the task of preaching the gospel at Meaux. But in 1525 far more serious charges were levelled against Briconnet. He was taken to Paris and condemned to die unless he recanted. Finally he did. He succumbed, feeling he could outwardly serve Rome and inwardly hold to the gospel.

After Farel left Meaux he went back to Paris but his powerful preaching there soon resulted in a hurried departure. From Paris, Farel went to his home in the province of Dauphiny. There he expounded to his family. Three of his brothers later came to faith in Christ. It was not long however, before persecution surrounded Farel in his home town, forcing him to wander from house to house among the villages and towns, preaching wherever he could, often hiding in forests and caves. During this time, Anemond de Coct, who later became one of the most ardent of preachers, was brought to know the Lord. In Dauphiny, Farel learned of the reforming work of Zwingli and of some of the other Swiss and German Reformers. Desiring to learn more and being so restricted in France, Farel in early 1524 left France for Basle, Switzerland.

Preparation 1524-1525

Basle at this point was one of the most important religious centres in Europe due to the presence of both Erasmus and Oecolampadius. Immediately upon Farel's arrival in Basle, he and Oecolampadius became fast friends despite their differing personalities. Erasmus however was a different matter. Farel chose to ignore him for several reasons. He felt that while Erasmus knew the truth, he would not stand up for it nor for those who preached it. Erasmus had also recently attacked the commentaries on the Pauline Epistles by Lefèvre. So Erasmus, before whom the whole world did obeisance, became the avowed enemy of William Farel, the fiery Frenchman who would not bow!

During his stay in Basle, Farel led a disputation on thirteen points which he had drawn up in a Thesis. Oecolampadius acted as his interpreter and Farel handled himself and the Scriptures very capably. He was rated highly in the estimation of the other reformers in Basle, and their affection for him increased. From this occasion on, Oecolampadius, Wolfhard, Conrad Pellican and others became his lasting friends.

During this year, 1524, Farel travelled to Zurich to meet Zwingli. He was warmly received and carried on a correspondence with Zwingli from then on. While in Zurich he also met Conrad Grebel and Myconius.

Back in Basle, Farel found that he was now not welcome. Erasmus had succeeded in stirring up public opinion, especially that of the town leaders, against him. Farel was told to leave, much to the dismay of his friends.

He was given letters to Capito in Strasbourg and Luther in Wittenburg. At Strasbourg, Farel met with more Reformers, Capito, Bucer, and Hedio. There is no account of his having gone to meet Luther. Again Farel returned to Basle, this time to remain hidden in the home of Oecolampadius.

It was at this point that Oecolampadius suggested to Farel the need of a ministry in the town of Montbeliard. Up to this point Farel had not considered himself a regular minister or preacher. However, he now realised that God had given him the qualifications and he was set apart to the ministry by Oecolampadius.

For some time Farel laboured in preaching the Word at Montbeliard. Opposition was aroused, especially from the leaders of the Roman church. The Superior of the Franciscans stood up during one of Farel's messages and called him a liar and a heretic. So great was the uproar from the people that both the Superior and Farel were arrested! Finally the Superior had to retract his charges. This opposition spurred on the reformer and after a time many were converted in this town. One morning Farel was meditating by the river when his attention was drawn to a procession coming across the bridge. Priests were carrying the image of St. Anthony and the people were chanting prayers to this saint. The idolatry and blindness of these people, so like that from which the Lord had delivered him, made his blood boil with holy indignation. He strode onto the bridge and before anyone knew what was happening he had snatched St. Anthony from the priest's hands and thrown it into the river, exclaiming 'Poor idolaters, will you never put away your idols?'[10] After a moment's stunned silence, the mob rushed at Farel but just then someone shouted that the image was sinking! This captured their attention, allowing Farel to escape.

Thus ended Farel's first ministry in Montbeliard. He hurried back to Basle and after a short stay left for Strasbourg in the summer of 1525. This was the same year that the renewed persecution took place at Meaux in France. Lefèvre and some of the others had been forced to flee. In October we find in Strasbourg a happy reunion between Farel, Lefèvre and Gerard Roussel. Living with his old friends served to stir up in William Farel the desire to go back and preach again in France. In early 1526, Lefèvre and Roussel and some others were recalled to France to preach but no letter of invitation came for Farel. Why? The answer to that lies in the difference between Farel and the others. They could preach Christ positively without negatively attacking the errors of Rome. Farel could not. Then a call came for Farel; not from France but from Berthold Haller, the Reformer of Berne. Haller asked Farel to come and preach in all the French speaking area of Switzerland under the protection of Berne. Farel viewed this as God's call and left Strasbourg.

During this period of preparation Farel had grown and matured immensely for the life work that lay ahead. He had travelled extensively and in meeting almost all the leaders of the Reformation had gained a comprehensive picture of the Reformed movement. The calm, scholarly Oecolampadius had thrust Farel into the Gospel ministry and at the same time had exhorted him to use discretion in this work. Disputations on doctrinal matters, especially against Luther's views of the Lord's Supper, had confirmed him in the knowledge that not man but the Word alone must be our guide.

Under the Shadow of Berne

Farel departed for Basle with a young friend, full of high hopes. Despite being so well acquainted with the mountain country, Farel became totally lost and disconcerted in the darkness and rain. He wrote later in semi-humorous vein to a friend:

> I am not such a fool as to be unable to tell one road from another, nor am I so slow and lazy as to be incapable of following an active man; but the Lord, by showing me how powerless I am even in little things, wished to teach me my utter helplessness in great things: how I am to rest, not on myself, but on Christ. At last after many slips and tumbles, I got to an inn, where the host endeavoured, by means of my purse, to compensate himself for the damage the French have done him in past years.[11]

Farel and his companion finally arrived at the home of Oecolampadius, wet and muddy. They recuperated there a few days and then Farel left for Berne. There Berthold Haller told him of the work in the area and suggested he begin his ministry at Aigle.

It was winter, 1526 when Farel entered Aigle as Ursinus the school teacher. It was not long before many of the children were benefiting from this gifted teacher who also taught them God's word, the Bible. This soon led to many of the parents coming for Bible studies. Many believed and by April of 1527 Farel felt the time had come to cease being Ursinus (his adopted name) and become Farel, the preacher. The priests, upon learning his identity, immediately raised opposition and the town refused to let Farel preach. Berne sent notices that he was to be allowed to preach but this only led to feelings of anger and insurrection against the authority of Berne. Farel continued during 1527 to preach in and around Aigle. Great numbers were affected.

In early 1528 Farel returned to Berne for an extremely important disputation between the Reformers and the Roman Catholics. By this time the Reformed leaders in Berne outnumbered the others. This confrontation was to have as its rule that all proofs could come only from Scripture, and Scripture must be interpreted only by other Scripture. Most of the leading Romanists stayed away. The disputation was led by Zwingli on the side of the Reformers. Near the end a French doctor

stood to dispute in Latin with Farel. His argument was based upon Matthew 5:25, 'Submit to thine adversary quickly.' 'The devil,' he stated, 'is our adversary and if we are to submit to the devil, how much more to the Church.'[12] No return argument was needed. The whole place broke up in laughter. The Reformation won the day and Berne abolished the Mass.

Farel resumed preaching in Aigle but again his work was hampered by the priests. Now, however, leaders from Berne arrived and held a public referendum in each of the four parishes. Aigle, Bex and Ollon declared for the Reform. Only Ormont remained firm for Rome. Farel carried on alone for some time but then received help from other gospel ministers. By the middle of 1529, Ormont too had received the Reformed faith.

Farel could not be tied down to one community. He preached throughout all the villages and towns to the south and also to the north and west of Berne. At Morat, great numbers heard the gospel and responded. The city of Lausanne would not allow Farel to preach. In November of 1529, Farel arrived at Neuchâtel. He began to preach in the yard of a small church in a little village just outside. The priest there was receptive to the gospel and encouraged Farel. Crowds came from Neuchâtel to hear him. After some time, the people of Neuchâtel, many of whom had responded to the gospel, led Farel into the town itself to preach in the square. In this way the gospel entered Neuchâtel where years later Farel was to spend the last years of his life and ministry.

From 1530 to 1532 Farel preached in town after town. At one place he was beaten almost to death. He was attacked with knives and guns, imprisoned, and vilified, but the Lord kept him and Farel continued. His usual plan of attack was to enter a town, preach until things became unsafe and then leave for a while and go elsewhere, allowing the Word sown to take root. Then he would return and establish the truth. Berne was always in the background, giving advice and assistance whenever possible. By July 1532 the gospel had been firmly established in almost the whole area over which Berne ruled.

Farel and the Waldensians

It was in this July that two of the Waldensian pastors (barbes), one named George and the other Martin Gonin, arrived in Granson to see Farel. There they told how they had heard of the Reformation and a few years before had sent two of their pastors to find out more about the Reformed faith. These two had met with Oecolampadius in Basle. They had rejoiced at what they heard from him and in turn they told the Reformers of their own faith and practice. However, Oecolampadius had kindly chastened them for their practice of going to mass and joining with the priests to some extent to save persecution. On the way back, one of these

pastors had been captured and killed but the other returned to tell all he had discovered. The chastening words of Oecolampadius caused a division amongst the Waldensians. Some declared that he was right and others said that they should continue as they had been doing. To settle this difference and receive further help they decided to hold a conference and invite Farel and others to come and speak to them.

Having heard this story, Farel and the other preachers with him decided that they should go to help these Christians who for so many centuries had stood apart from Rome. After having received directions on how to get to their mountain valleys secretly, Farel bade the pastors goodbye. In September, 1532, Farel and one of his colleagues, Anthony Saunier, left for the Piedmont region. They arrived safely and the meeting began on September 12th. There were two sides presented. Those for remaining close to Rome were led by two Waldensian pastors named Daniel and John. Farel and Anthony Saunier led the other side. Farel clearly showed from the Scriptures that all the ceremonies of Rome were wrong. More basic was the issue of 'free will.' Daniel and John adamantly defended this doctrine but they finally stood alone, for the other Waldensians declared that what Farel taught was what their forefathers had taught, as seen in their old confessions of faith.

While Farel was among the Waldensians he became aware of the tragic scarcity of Bibles. He promised that he would do all he could to print French versions of the Scriptures for them and also to send them schoolmasters. It was not long before he had promises of fifteen hundred gold crowns towards the printing of Bibles. Then Farel and Saunier took their leave of these remarkable mountain people.

Geneva

Travelling back from the Piedmont country, Farel and Saunier arrived at the city of Geneva on October 2nd, 1532. For some time Farel had had his eye on this city. Within the city of Geneva was a large party of Huguenots. Although this name later came to mean French protestants, at this early period in Geneva it referred to a (large) group of people and leaders in Geneva, who, although many of them were Catholic, desired freedom from papal religious oppression. Some, led by a man named Baudichon, did lean towards the Reformation.

Into this situation walked Farel, knowing only too well that wanting deliverance from the oppression of papacy is not equivalent to desiring salvation in Jesus Christ. His preaching was heard by many of the Huguenots gladly, but it soon provoked a terrible uproar from the most ardent papists. After demanding that Farel leave town immediately, they then changed their tactics and declared that he should not be condemned without being heard. Farel and Saunier were invited to the

priest's home to have opportunity to speak. It had already been decided that they would not leave alive. This was suspected, so some of the Huguenot magistrates went along. As Farel began to speak, he was soon drowned out by the shouts of 'Kill the Lutheran hound! To the Rhône!'[13] After the place was quietened by the magistrates, Farel and Saunier were asked to step out of the room while they reached a decision. Hearing the yells of the people inside and the roar of the Roman Catholic crowd outside, one of the Catholic guards aimed his gun at Farel. The prime flashed but the powder did not ignite. Farel walked up to the guard and said, 'I am not shaken by a popgun. Your toy does not alarm me.'[14] Thus ended Farel's first two days at Geneva as he and Saunier were hurried away across Lake Geneva by some Huguenot friends that night.

Farel did not give up. If he could not crack Geneva, maybe someone else could. So he sent another preacher, Anthony Froment, to begin as he had in Aigle—as a schoolteacher. For three months Froment laboured in Geneva, first as a teacher and then openly preaching the Word. Many believed. However, the priest led a band composed mostly of zealous women who tried to attack Anthony. He was hidden in a friend's home but that night he too fled Geneva. This was New Year, 1533. Following this was a year in which Geneva witnessed what almost amounted to civil war between the rival factions, the Romanists and the Huguenots. During this time Farel was encouraging and building up believers, and had initiated the task of translating the Scriptures into French.

On December 21st, 1533, Baudichon, leader of the Huguenots and a devout Christian, arrived back in Geneva from a trip to Berne. With him was Farel. Geneva more and more turned to the Reformation as men and women were born into the Kingdom of God. The city was still in constant turmoil with both Catholics and Huguenots bearing arms 'for protection.' In August, 1534 the absent Bishop of Geneva, realising that his power was being destroyed there, decided to join with the Duke of Savoy, make a 'sneak' attack upon Geneva and take over by force of arms. The attack failed but the armies of the Duke laid siege to Geneva. In order to protect the city it was decided to tear down all the suburbs outside the walls and so one third of the citizens of Geneva were left homeless and had to be put up within the city.

During 1535, the French Bible was completed and smuggled out of Geneva to the Waldensians. Also during this year many of the Roman Catholics, especially the Convent of St. Claire, had left Geneva. In October, a small army of 432 men (and a few women) led by a Christian soldier from Neuchâtel, completely routed a large army of the Duke of Savoy but failed to join with the men of Geneva because they were tricked into returning home.

Then in January of 1536 the army of Berne finally came and Geneva was

free from the forces of the Duke of Savoy. By May of that year Geneva had become an independent republic and the people voted to adopt the Reform. Farel already had become busy getting the new government to pass laws raising the level of acceptable civic conduct. Already he saw that there were many factions who were beginning to revolt. He knew that he did not have the organisational ability to bind things together and prevent unhealthy forces gaining control.

Farel and Calvin

It was in July, 1536 that Farel heard that John Calvin, author of the Institutes of the Christian religion, was passing near Geneva. Immediately, Farel knew that here was the man he needed in Geneva. Calvin had other ideas and expressed to Farel his desire to go to Strasbourg and study. After all his entreaties failed, William Farel looked straight at the young Calvin and thundered, 'May God curse your rest and curse your studies if for their sake you flee the work he would have you do.'[15] Calvin relented.

Working together now, Farel and Calvin began to organise and discipline the church in Geneva. Orderly observance of the Lord's table was maintained with denial of the sacrament to those whose lives were unworthy. Catechism classes were held for the youth of the city.

But by 1538 the two reformers were sitting on a powder keg. In that year the opposition party came into power and so those whom Calvin termed the spiritual libertines held sway in Geneva. At the Easter services Farel and Calvin refused to serve the Lord's Supper because of all the ungodly present. This was the last straw and they were both banished from Geneva.

The Last Years

Shortly after being forced from Geneva, Farel received a call from Neuchâtel which became his home base for the rest of his life. Calvin of course was recalled to Geneva three years later, again under much pressure from Farel.

In 1542 we read of Farel in Metz. There he preached to some 3,000 people and was heard even above the church bells which a monk was ringing! Later near Metz he was attacked and almost strangled by a group of women. Shortly after this he was almost killed as 300 believers were attacked by armed men while partaking of the Lord's Supper. He was nursed back to health in Strasbourg.

He and Calvin remained in the closest contact. In 1553, Calvin received news that Farel was dying at Neuchâtel. He hurried to spend some time with his friend but remarkably Farel recovered. Later that

same year Farel was in Geneva to stand by Calvin in the affair of Servetus. Farel spent these days trying to win Servetus to the Lord and it was he who walked with him and supported him as he was being led to execution. Farel agreed with this execution, but like Calvin felt it should have been carried out in a less painful way.

Shortly after this the libertines brought charges against Farel for his words of rebuke against those who had attacked Calvin in the Servetus affair. Again there were cries of 'To the Rhône.' Farel however, was allowed to speak in his own defence and when he had finished, not only was it not 'to the Rhône', but Geneva held a banquet in his honour.

In 1558 Farel finally took time to get married! Even in this he raised a furore for at 69 he married the 18 year old daughter of his housekeeper. It was an exceptionally happy marriage and produced a son, John.

In the early 1560's he made two more trips to his home territory of the province of Dauphiny. On the second of these the Bishop of Gap embraced the evangelical faith.

In 1564 we again see Farel in Geneva, this time to say a last goodbye to his dear friend John Calvin. In the early part of the next year he was again found in the dangerous area of Metz. After preaching powerfully for a period of time in this town, following one of his messages Farel sank down in exhaustion. He was carried back to Neuchâtel and on September 13th, 1565 William Farel went to be with his Lord at 76 years of age.

Conclusion

To the end of his life, William Farel had one driving goal, to spread the gospel of Christ to those locked in error and sin. His zeal, it is true, sometimes ran ahead of his discretion, but more often it was a matter of the same boldness to face the strongholds of Satan as is exhibited in the lives of Elijah and Paul.

As an author, Farel is not to be compared with men like Luther or Calvin. This may explain why he stands so much in the shadow of these men today. However, that is not the whole reason. It is also because Farel withdrew himself into the shadow. When Calvin began writing, Farel withdrew his books from circulation. He was only concerned that the best be done for the Lord and self-interest had no place.

All through his ministry, Farel fought to bring unity, on the basis of truth, to the Reformed movement. It was he who was largely responsible for the unity achieved between Calvin and Bullinger on the issue of the Eucharist. This achieved a unity of the French and Swiss reformed work. However, Farel was no ecumenist in today's sense. He is quoted by

Calvin, 'While the Lord is not our bond of union, the union is accursed.'[16] May the life of this great servant of Christ challenge us into more determined efforts in the cause of Christ today.

[1] Jacques Courvoisier, *Farel and Geneva*, McCormick Quarterly, November, 1967.
[2] Frances Bevan, *William Farel*, p. 27.
[3] Ibid., p. 35.
[4] Ibid., p. 37.
[5] J. H. Merle D'Aubigné, *History of the Great Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* p. 558.
[6] Bevan, op. cit., p. 53.
[7] D'Aubigné, op. cit., pp. 554-556.
[8] Ibid., p. 556.
[9] Ibid., p. 573.
[10] Ibid., p. 601.
[11] Bevan, op. cit., p. 120.
[12] D'Aubigné, op. cit., p. 759.
[13] Bevan, op. cit., p. 237.
[14] Elaine Jessie Fletcher, *Farel the Firebrand*, p. 74.
[15] Bevan, op. cit., p. 367.
[16] Paul Henry, D.D., *The Life and Times of John Calvin*, p. 249.

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Baptism in the Early Church

by Stephen Dray

SUPPORTERS OF THE BAPTISM OF INFANTS (PAEDOBAPTISTS) USUALLY USE TWO separate arguments to defend and support their practice. Firstly, they suggest the biblical theology of baptism is not only consistent with, but encourages the practice of the infant rite. Secondly, they assert that the very earliest evidence in Christian literature, including the implicit witness of the New Testament, witnesses to the practice. The first argument has been dealt with previously in this magazine and in *Children of Abraham*, so we are concerning ourselves here with the paedobaptist claim for indications of infant-baptism in the writings of the New Testament and the early church.

In the first place we turn to the question of whether the New Testament provides us with any evidence for the baptism of infants.

The New Testament Evidence

The paedobaptist appeals, broadly speaking, to four distinct types of evidence in the New Testament which, he claims, testify to his practice. We will deal with each in turn.

(1) *Household Baptism* On three occasions in Acts and in one other New Testament passage (1 Cor. 1:16) mention is made of the baptism of 'households'. Paedobaptist theologians have made much polemical weight out of these references, asserting that a household naturally implies children as well as adults. Some have gone further, arguing that such references *must* include children because the word 'household' is really a linguistic equivalent of 'family' and the term is found used in this sense in the Greek Old Testament. This argument is, however, far from water-tight. Firstly, the usual error is made of equating the baptist position with the baptism of adults when in fact what we contend for is the baptism of believers only. This misunderstanding is a constant weakness in paedobaptist writing. Secondly, the word 'household' is used in a far wider sense than 'family' in the Greek Old Testament, as well as the New, and it is a word that needs to be translated according to context. Consequently, it cannot be imposed upon the text as a word with a fixed meaning and then used to support the paedobaptist argument. Finally, and most importantly, the passages cited in the New Testament, in context, suggest that the word 'family' is not the most obvious rendering of the original Greek. In the case of Lydia (Acts16:14,15) her considerable commercial activity makes it probable that she was single. Presumably, therefore, she had slaves as her 'household'—a feature characteristic of the social life of the New Testament period. The incident with Cornelius is similarly lacking in support for the paedobaptist cause, especially as in this instance the context shows that those who were baptised were those upon whom the Holy Spirit had already fallen (Acts 10:44,45); were

presumably articulate (10:46) and are, anyway, detailed (10:24). The remaining passage in Acts concerning the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:30,31) is concerned not with infant baptism but household salvation. The jailer asks Paul how he may be saved to which the apostle replies that both he and his household may be saved if they believe. Upon such belief Paul baptises them (16:33). Belief presupposes that they were capable of, at least, elementary rational activity and although not excluding the possibility of children would argue against infants being among those baptised. Little more can be added by the consideration of the household of Stephanus (1 Cor. 1:16) although the term household could in that case mean 'place of worship' (compare Acts 2:2). There is certainly evidence in the Old Testament for the use of the word as 'shorthand' for the Temple. I suggest, therefore, that 'household' baptism in no way supports the argument for the inclusion of infants, but rather the converse, and the Book of Acts in particular does not witness to the baptism of 'covenant' families, but rather of converted families or household groups.

(2) *Mark 10:13-16* A second piece of support for the practice of infant baptism in the New Testament is often sought in this passage where the expression 'hinder not' is supposed to be evidence of baptismal liturgical practice and language in the early church. Some scholars have said that this story was invented by the early church for the specific purpose of vindicating the practice of paedobaptism! If so, the writers made a poor job of it because it fails to convince many! But in any case, such an argument depends upon a view of the development of the New Testament writings which is intolerable to those who accept the infallability of Scripture. In addition, there is no evidence in the New Testament for the use of 'hinder' as a technical term—in fact the word is found quite generally in the Scriptures with no such understanding in mind. The only use in connection with baptism, Acts 8: 36, being of itself unable to furnish the necessary proof.

(3) *Proselyte baptism* If the paedobaptist is down in this round he is certainly not ready to take a count! He responds with an appeal to the practice of the baptism of proselytes (Gentile converts to Judaism) and their children. This, he suggests, was the background to the New Testament practice of baptism. However, such arguing is not as plausible as it first appears, for not only is the evidence for the baptism of children of such converts not to be found until the second century A.D. but also there is the danger that the argument proves more than the paedobaptist would wish. The proselyte baptism of children when it was later established was provisional in nature so that if the child subsequently rejected Judaism he was regarded as not having been baptised at all. Also, children born after the baptism of their parents were not baptised themselves because they were regarded as born 'into holiness'. New Testament Christian baptism could equally well have developed from John's baptism of repentance of non-infants (even if he had copied, in part, the Jewish

practice) and this would seem more likely because despite evident differences the New Testament does seem to regard the rites of John and later the apostles as varying in fulness rather than in nature. Not surprisingly, some paedobaptists are led to assert that there is an inherent difference between the two—John's baptism is too radical for the paedobaptist straitjacket.

(4) *Silence* The only remaining stand the paedobaptist tends to make is the appeal to silence. A number of such arguments have been made, one of which we discuss at this point. Recognising the covenantal continuity between the Old and the New Testaments, some suggest that the New Testament believers would have assumed that infants were proper subjects for baptism as they were for circumcision. Were this not the case, such advocates argue, there would be references in the New Testament writings to the ensuing debate, even if only an occasional aside in the Epistles. This argument suffers, of course, from lacking proof either way but it may be suggested that equally, if infant baptism were practiced in the light of the Old Covenant we would have expected furore over the admission of both sexes. In addition, the suggestion from silence fails to do justice to the obvious changes that accompany covenantal continuity. One feels bound to conclude that in the light of the previous discussion there is no evidence for infant baptism in the New Testament—unless one reads the evidence into and not out of it.

Early Church Writings

If the practice of infant baptism is not to be found in the New Testament, how and when did it begin? Was it, perhaps, instituted by the apostles and not found in the Scriptures because, after all, their interest is not especially with prescriptions regarding baptism? Or, did the practice emerge later? To these questions we turn by looking at the writings of the early church on baptism.

For a moment, we jump several centuries to the days of Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo in North Africa (A.D. 354-430) because he asserted that infant baptism was the normal practice in his time (together I may add, with the logical corollary of infant communion—a practice still found in the Eastern Orthodox Church). In fact his case has an obvious flaw because he himself, though he had a godly mother, was not baptised until after conversion as an adult! What undoubtedly is the case, and is important for our purposes, is that *following* Augustine infant baptism became the usual procedure. This was probably largely because of his influence. He demolished the grounds for postponed baptism which had until his time been adopted by many (including no less than the Emperor Constantine, who was baptised on his deathbed) who believed that later sins could thus be washed away. The significance for our purposes of the Bishop of Hippo's witness is that he can, appropriately, be the latest witness we consider in tracing the development of infant baptism.

From the period immediately following the apostles until about A.D. 200 extant Christian literature is very sparse but what we have does contain several clear references to baptism, in addition to one or two alleged cases. Of considerable importance are the documents known as the Didache (dated about A.D. 100-130) and the writings of the Christian apologist, Justin Martyr (A.D. 150-165) because both of these witnesses give detailed accounts of baptismal practice. Neither, however, includes any possible references to infant baptism and Justin Martyr seems to deny explicitly the practice by mentioning the preparatory teaching given to baptismal candidates. This is done without the mention of any possible exceptions, a point which is significant because Justin does appear to be seeking to give an exhaustive account of Christian worship. The Didache is also interesting because it provides the first example of pouring rather than immersion in baptism. However, the practice is referred to only as a contingent measure if there was a lack of sufficient water, and immersion remained the usual practice throughout the early centuries of the Church. The combined weight of these two references is, therefore, significant because though both are immediately concerned with baptismal practice, unlike any passage in the New Testament, neither provides any possible mention of infant baptism.

Apart from an alleged, but rather far-fetched reference in Aristides (A.D. 117-138) no other evidence is cited by either baptist or paedobaptist scholars until Irenaeus (about A.D. 180) who wrote a controversial passage saying:

'For he (Christ) came to save all persons by himself; all I mean, who by him are regenerated unto God: infants and little ones and children and youths and elder persons.'

Paedobaptists argue that regeneration here equals baptism, which is certainly possible in the light of the then current sacramental theology. However, it can with equal force be suggested that the reference is not to baptism at all, but to Jesus' sanctifying every stage of life through having himself lived through it. This, therefore, cannot without other evidence be made to argue for infant baptism.

Until we turn to the third century we are unable to trace any explicit references to the baptism of infants. We would have expected such a widely travelled student as Clement of Alexandria (who died about A.D. 195) to have given it a mention when he discussed baptism. On the contrary he, like Justin, assumes catechetical instruction prior to baptism. With Tertullian, the North African theologian (A.D. 200-230) the silence is broken and in five of his voluminous works references are explicitly made to infant baptism. Ironically, perhaps, he was anti-paedobaptist! (though his ground was the shaky one that infants are not originally sinful and accordingly do not need baptism). About the same time the practice probably began to develop in Rome because Hippolytus (about A.D. 217)

defends it. Although it is possible that the reference in Hippolytus is a later interpolation of a corrupt text it seems probable that the practice would have begun to infiltrate the capital of the Empire soon after its emergence elsewhere.

After Tertullian, the next reference to infant baptism in North Africa is found in Cyprian, upon whose testimony Augustine laid so much weight. In 253 Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, found it necessary to call a council to decide on the matter as it had been raised by one of his 'country' clergy. This fact in itself is significant because it suggests that the question was still an open one and, as yet, there was no settled practice of infant baptism. The council decided unanimously in favour of infant baptism on the grounds of original sin and the belief in the efficacy of the rite of baptism to confer regeneration. As they also believed in the unity of the sacraments, regarding the Lord's Supper as the privilege of members of the Church, they accordingly extended the Lord's Supper to baptised infants, as Augustine was to do later. Once the case for postponed baptism had been defeated by Augustine it was but a short step to the Cypranic council's decision winning the day, especially in the western part of the Roman Empire.

Elsewhere in the Empire, notably at Rome, tomb inscriptions have been found, dated to the third century, which mention the baptism of children prior to death. However, only three examples can be cited of infants under two years of age being so baptised and even in the cases of older children they are clearly emergency rites in the face of imminent death. Such evidence is very far from confirming that the practice of infant baptism was the normal procedure in the third-century church. In the light of our survey of the evidence we can say that no unified practice of infant baptism is found until the fifth century.

In the eastern part of the empire Origen, some time after A.D. 232 mentions the practice of paedobaptism and gives it his sanction, in one place justifying it on the grounds of apostolic tradition. This claim of apostolic sanction is rendered exceedingly dubious by the polemical nature of Origen's work and the fact that it was written because of a disturbance about baptism in the Church at Caesarea. Clearly the baptismal practice in Syria was far from settled. Such a state of affairs is surprising if the paedobaptist claims that infants were baptised on the basis of proselyte rites is at all valid, because we would expect the baptism of infants to develop more rapidly in the east where the Jewish community was larger. However, even in A.D. 381 Gregory Nazianzen states a preference for baptising children who can answer catechetical questions for themselves. But shortly after this paedobaptism became the normal practice in the Eastern as well as the Western Church, so that by the fifth century the practice was apparently universal.

Having surveyed the evidence we can conclude that not only was infant baptism not practised in the Apostolic period, but neither did it appear at all in the early church before the last few years of the second century. Until then, although increasingly susceptible to corruption, the practice of baptism would seem to have followed that of the New Testament—conversion being followed by baptism, which was a symbol of conversion. This was accompanied by the official welcoming of the baptised person into the local gathering of believers which formed the proper basis upon which the believer was received to the Lord's Supper. This whole practice, testified to by Justin Martyr, is sadly neglected in many baptist churches today. Finally, how did the change to infant baptism take place? Basically one factor was involved—an increasing belief in the magical effect of the sacraments, evident as early as Ignatius (A.D. 105-115) in the attitude to the Lord's Supper. In baptism this magical approach was seen in the conviction that the baptismal water itself washed away sins. Once, therefore, the (biblical) doctrine of original sin was linked to this (unbiblical) conception of baptism it was but a short step to extending the practice of baptism to infants. This was especially so after the hurdle of postponement was demolished by Augustine. Better baptise as early as possible to make salvation certain! Moreover, because the two sacraments were on New Testament grounds indissolubly held together, infant communion was adopted.

If it is true that the practice of infant baptism is found neither in the New Testament church nor the immediate post-apostolic period but that in fact it emerged as an unbiblical development based on a faulty sacramental theology then it must be rejected. In its place, the practice which the whole Christian Church ought to espouse is that only those who have believed in Christ are baptised, through which baptism they are brought into membership of the local community of the body of Christ and may rightly receive the Lord's Supper.

Both *K. Aland:* Did the Early Church Baptise Infants (S.C.M. Press 1963) and *P. K. Jewett:* The Doctrine of the Church: Sacraments, Infant Baptism and Confirmation (unpublished thesis: Fuller Theological Seminary 1960) are invaluable. The latter, by a baptist, provides the fullest modern survey of both the history and the theology of baptism. The former, written by a paedo-baptist scholar reaches the same historical conclusions as this paper although it justifies the modern practice of infant baptism by asserting that the doctrine of original sin as developed by the later Fathers was correct.

The four arguments for infant baptism in the New Testament period discussed in the paper are those of:

E. Stauffer: Baptism in Pristine Christianity in Religion in Geschichte and Gegenwant (1931) for Household Baptism.

O. Cullmann: Baptism in the New Testament (S.C.M. 1950) on Mk. 10.

J. Jeremias: Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries (S.C.M. 1960) and The Origins of Infant Baptism (S.C.M. 1963). Jeremias deals with proselyte baptism and inscriptions.

J. I. Packer: unpublished lecture for argument from silence. However, discussion of Stauffer, Cullmann and Jeremias is adequately covered in Aland and Jewett.

John Owen's Insights into 'Schism'

by W. E. Payne

WHEN THE WINDS OF REFORMATION BLOW, MEN GATHER TOGETHER TO establish churches which, in their view, conform to the teaching of Scripture. Sometimes many of them feel compelled to leave the churches they formerly attended. In spite of a natural reluctance, their conscience and their understanding of the Word of God require them to take this difficult step. Men who make such a move usually find the charge of 'schism' levelled against them.

The words 'schism' and 'schismatic' are emotionally loaded and are calculated to bring the one so accused into disrepute. In seventeenth century England the Roman Catholic Church hurled the accusation against the Anglican Church; the Anglican Church employed it against the Presbyterian Church; and the Presbyterians in turn levelled it against the Independent, or Congregational Churches! The Independents who were thus in everybody's disfavour, were fortunate to have a man of the mind of John Owen to investigate the whole question of schism. In 1657 he published a treatise in which he showed that the commonly accepted idea of the nature of schism had no support in Scripture.

Owen states that since the days of Augustine schism had been considered 'a causeless separation from the communion and worship of any true church, with a relinquishment of its society as to a joint celebration of the ordinances of the gospel'. However, he ably demonstrates that the Greek word σχισμα (from which our English word schism comes), whenever it is used in an ecclesiastic sense, never refers to a person or party leaving a church; rather he says, it refers to troubles and dissensions *within* a congregation.

To use Owen's words, it denotes 'differences of mind and judgment, with troubles ensuing thereon, amongst men met in some one assembly, about the compassing of a common end and design'. 'In the sense contended about' says Owen 'it is used only by Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians—chapters 1:10; 11:18 and 12:25. Of schism in any other place, or in reference to any other person we hear nothing.'

The schism about which Paul rebukes the Corinthians entailed 'differences amongst themselves about unnecessary things. On these they engaged in disputes and sidings even in their solemn assemblies, when

they came altogether for the same worship, about which they differed not.' So schism according to Scripture was not a problem of people who separated themselves from churches, but of people who remained in a church but marred its unity by needless arguments and differences. Owen points out that the matter of people separating themselves from a church is never in the Scripture called schism. According to Owen's definition, schism consists in 'causeless differences and contentions amongst the members of a particular church, contrary to that exercise of love, prudence, and forebearance, which are required of them amongst themselves, and towards one another'.

For a person to be guilty of this sin, according to Scripture, three things were necessary says Owen:

1. That they be members of, or belong to some *one church*, which is so by the institution and appointment of Jesus Christ.

2. That they raise or entertain and persist in, causeless differences with others of that church, more or less to the interruption of that exercise of love, in all the fruits of it which ought to be amongst them, and the disturbance of the due performance of the duties required of the church in the worship of God.

3. That these differences be occasioned by and do belong to some things in a remoter or nearer distance, appertaining to the worship of God.

According to Owen, this was the sin that the apostle rebuked, blamed and condemned under the name of schism. He gives the following reasons for considering this such a dreadful sin.

1. It is evidently a despising of the authority of Jesus Christ, the great sovereign Lord and Head of the church.

2. His wisdom, whereby he hath ordered all things in his church on set purpose that schism and divisions may be prevented is no less despised.

3. The grace and goodness of Christ, whence he has promised to give us one heart and one way, to leave us peace such as the world cannot give, with innumerable other promises of the like importance, are disregarded thereby.

4. Its constant growing to further evil, in some to apostasy itself, and its usual and certain ending in strife, variance, debate, evil surmisings, wrath, confusion, disturbance, both public and private, are also to be laid at its door.

Owen recognises that there is such a thing as 'blameable departure' from a church, but insists that such may be reduced to three causes in Scripture:

1. *Apostasy.* This is when a person renounces the faith in Christ which he formerly professed and therefore departs from the church (Heb. 6:4-6; 10:25).

2. *Irregularity of walking.* Such applies to people who refuse to maintain regular and consistent fellowship with one local church. They, being a law to themselves wander where they will.

3. *Professed sensuality.* This applies to those who insist on indulging fleshly lusts and unlawful ways, they separate themselves from the church which will not tolerate such behaviour.

But 'for a man to withdraw or withhold himself from the communion external and visible of any church or churches, on the pretension and plea, be it true or otherwise, that the worship, doctrine, or discipline instituted by Christ is corrupted among them, with which corruption he dares not defile himself, it is nowhere in the Scripture called schism'.

Owen confessed 'I would rather, much rather, spend all my time and days in making up and healing the breaches and schisms that are amongst Christians, than one hour in justifying our divisions, even therein wherein, on the one side, they are capable of a fair defence.' Nevertheless, he hoped that by turning the light of Scripture on the question of schism he could 'cool off' the angry debate which drew most of its heat from a misuse of that word. His insights can still be of great value in our day.

In concluding we may ask what application to our day does Owen's insight provide? Two things readily suggest themselves. First, the importance of bringing the light of Scripture to bear on disputes among Christians. It must be acknowledged that all too often the motivation behind religious debates is the desire to 'put down' the opponent rather than more clearly to understand the mind of God. That mind is made known in the Scriptures. Would the disputes in our day concerning 'the baptism of the Spirit', the 'last days', 'baptism', 'the atonement' etc. be more readily resolved if we were to abide more faithfully to the scriptural usage of words involved, and be ready to accept the Scripture as alone authoritative?

Secondly Owen's insight would suggest that if Christians strongly disagree on matters of doctrine or practice it may well be preferable, and more honouring to God for such Christians to 'go their separate ways' as far as church affiliation is concerned, rather than cause real schism in one church by remaining in it. This may sound shocking to some readers, but the historic conflict between Calvinism and Arminianism (which is still a reality today) may provide a case in point. The writer agrees with Owen's comment in the introduction of another of his works when he said, 'One church cannot wrap in her communion Austin and Pelagius, Calvin and Arminius' (The epistle dedicatory, Vol. 10, p. 7).

Rather than power struggles ensuing, suspicion and ill will being fostered, is it not preferable for Christians to charitably recognise their differences, and agree to go their differing ways, allowing each other to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience in the light of his Word? This is not to make light of the need of Christian unity, but merely to face reality. The unity of Christ's church is undoubtedly a matter for our concern, but to quote Owen again, 'The closing of differences amongst Christians is like opening the book in the Revelation—there is none able or worthy to do it, in heaven or in earth, but the Lamb: when he will put forth the greatness of his power for it shall be accomplished, and not before.' In other words faith should be exercised in the omnipotence of the Lord to heal breaches and divisions.

Peaceful churches where the members can give full exercise and expression to their convictions may well do more to further the cause of Christ, than those whose energies are sapped by internal conflicts.

The correctness or otherwise of people leaving a church must be judged in the light of the reasons or motives involved in each case. It is noted that in some churches those who have previously opposed true doctrine have been brought by patient endeavour and teaching to embrace the truth. Separation has thus been avoided and the church's unity kept intact. Where this can be achieved it is a matter for rejoicing.

Anyone who reads Owen's treatise on schism will be forced to acknowledge that he wrote in a wholesome and Christian spirit. His comment, quoted earlier, stating his preference for 'making up and healing the breaches and schisms among Christians' was not mere display. His concern was undoubtedly the glory of God, the vindication of his truth, the good of his church, and the spread of his kingdom. I believe that his work in this area of concern can be of great value in our day.

Carey Ministers Conference—Bristol 1977

Bookings from a variety of areas are already being sent to John Rubens, 36 Longden Close, Northwood End, Haynes, Beds. for the Ministers' Conference which has been arranged to take place at Badock Hall, University of Bristol from 4th-7th January, 1977. Please give early notification of your intention to attend.

The different experiences of our enjoyment of Christ are portrayed in the Song of Solomon and can be described as follows:

1. The enjoyment of Christ's unchanging love
2. The enjoyment of the glory of Christ's person
3. The enjoyment of Christ's esteem
4. The enjoyment of communion with Christ

Points one and two were opened up in the last issue (No. 32). *The theme is here continued and completed.*

Christian Experience
The enjoyment of Christ—part 2

GOD COMMENDETH HIS LOVE TOWARD US, IN THAT WHILE WE WERE YET sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). That such unworthy objects should be loved is mysterious and hard to comprehend. As we have already seen, the love of Christ for his people is intense. It is as strong as death. Many waters cannot quench it (Song 8:6,7). There is a love which springs from the character of God which has no relationship to worth or beauty. In spite of our awful, lost, damnable state he loved us. We are now to consider not the distinguishing, electing love of God, but his complacent love. This is a love which delights in subjects for what they are in themselves. We read of this in John 14:21-23 and in Zephaniah 3:17. Here we observe the Father and the Son resting in, rejoicing in and delighting in the church for what she has been made. Before she was worthless. But now in union with Christ she has been made worthy. This worth cannot make her proud for it is a worth that has come by free grace alone. She sees herself as 'black' yet she knows that she has been made 'comely' (1:5). The complacent love of God is as mysterious as the electing love of God. Yet Christ esteems his Church for what she is in herself. We are to enjoy that esteem and in order to do so now consider some of the descriptions which Christ uses to express his loving esteem.

3. The enjoyment of Christ's esteem

'*Thou art beautful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners. Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me*' (6:4,5).

Here Christ declares his esteem for his Church, comparing her with the most beautiful city of Tirzah and with the majesty of Jerusalem. Her spiritual warfare is conducted with a oneness of purpose, like a formidable army, awe inspiring in its disciplined and determined advance. The spiritual beauty of the Church is reflected and as her eyes turn appealingly

to him he cries, 'Turn away thine eyes from me, for they are taking me by storm.'

While there is much imperfection to lament in ourselves we must not underestimate, undervalue or despise in any way that good work which God has begun in his people. It is common in some quarters always to degrade the Church, overlooking the fact that there are innumerable believers in whom God has worked over the years, transforming them into choice disciples. The news of divided churches should not take from us the enjoyment and encouragement to be derived from the great majority of churches where the brethren dwell together in unity and where the fragrance of that unity and love is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard that went down to the skirts of his garments (Ps. 133:2). Christ's admiration of his Church is unequivocal. If we spent more time expressing appreciation of our benefits and of that mighty work of sanctification which is going on constantly and spent less time moaning and grumbling we would not only enjoy our privileges more but be more encouraging to God's people ourselves.

I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots (1:9). What shall we say to Christ's admiration of the Church's stateliness, strength and carriage? What strength is ours through Christ by whom we can do all things! Will we not enjoy both the grace he supplies and his admiration of his gifts? He ascended up on high, gave gifts to men, even the rebellious. He has made his Church beautiful. Shall we not admire that and enjoy it?

Your cheeks are comely with ornaments, your neck with strings of jewels. We will make you ornaments of gold, studded with silver (1:10,11). As a princess much loved by a prince receives with joy those tokens of his love, we should rest in Christ's love and gladly receive his gifts which are pledges of his esteem (Ezek. 16:11-14, Gen. 24:22,23). In this life we have no jewels, but rather the ashes of the hearth and the dust of the broom. Peter gives us the clue as to the meaning of these precious jewels when he refers to the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. The beautiful graces imparted by the Holy Spirit are the jewels given to make his people beautiful. Indeed, outward beauty, as was the case with Absalom, is just deception. Apart from the comeliness of a holy and devout life within, outward beauty is empty.

The most difficult section of the Song, and the part which lends itself least to detailed exposition, is chapter 7:1-10. How are we to apply these similes in the context of the Christian life? All scripture is God-breathed and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16). It is best to take the section as a whole and

say that Christ sees his bride, the Church, in her perfection. *Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee* (4:7). The feet, thighs, body, breasts, neck, eyes, nose and hair are all perfect in form. The proportion of each part to all the others is perfect. The conclusion to which we come is that perfection of detail and perfection of proportion are to be sought in sanctification. Prayer, communion, meditation, fellowship, good works, conversation: in all activities and in all graces, we are to seek perfection even as our Father in heaven is perfect (Matt. 5:48).

The enjoyment of the grace of God exemplified in the various members of the Church should have its place in our own experience. We enjoy Christ's esteem of us by cherishing that which he esteems namely that which is true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report (Phil. 4:8).

4. The enjoyment of communion with Christ

As union with Christ is permanent and therefore constant in its application so communion ought to be without cessation. There are times when our communion is broken. Then we seek renewal, which, after some effort on our part, may be restored (3:1-5). But sometimes (mostly through our own carelessness) we can go through periods of painful and sustained barrenness (5:1-8).

Enjoyment of communion with Christ is experienced in the context of the Church, particularly so during seasons of revival. It is also known at those times when we especially seek Christ in private prayer or communion. This is not to exclude other occasions such as communion during the night watches.

Communion in the context of the worship of the assembly

The gates of Zion are loved by the Lord more than any homes of believers (Ps. 87:2). Family worship is essential (Deut. 6:7) but meetings at home, whatever their form, can never replace the instituted worship of God (Ps. 107:32). Here, above all other places of meeting, the Lord manifests his presence and meets with his people. The assurance of this basic principle is seen in the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34, 35) and in the same shekinah glory filling the temple (2 Chron. 7:1,2).

In the Song the Church is compared to a garden enclosed like a plot of ground well laid out and walled around, separated from the world for the delight and recreation of the owner (4:12-16). The most fruitful and beautiful trees and shrubs are planted in this garden which is watered by a spring of life. Many various and excellent spices are to be found in the garden. These represent the delightsome graces of the Spirit. As spices have excellent, reviving, medicinal qualities, so the graces of the Spirit manifested in the children of God provide joy, cheer, spiritual healing and delight.

The wind from the north has a bracing, strengthening, healthy and invigorating effect on the garden while the warm south wind draws out the fragrance of the spices within it in exhilarating fashion. It is the desire of believers to be fruitful that they may be delighted in by Christ, and that he should come into the garden to find pleasure in the pleasantness of the fruits and spices. The energising power of the Holy Spirit is typified by the wind. Believers pray for and desire his ministry (4:16). In this way the Church fulfils her function of being a haven of heaven on earth, a paradise before the time. There is no communion for the individual believer so sweet, so refreshing and so strengthening as that found within the doors of Zion.

Churches vary a great deal in their spiritual condition as can be seen by reading the letters to the seven churches of Asia. In many churches where the ministry is consistently good individuals within find some times to be peculiarly refreshing but other times difficult. To most, most of the time, the local church is a tree of life and joy, the place above all others where personal communion with Christ is renewed and strengthened. Occasionally there are seasons of special refreshment in the local church when the presence of Christ is unusually powerful. Such times are described in the Song.

For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear in the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land (2:11,12). Communion simply means to share in common with others. In the reviving of the Church we share with Christ the warmth of devotion, for the winter is past. We enjoy the cheer of a better season for the rain is over and gone. We glory in the beauty and advance of spiritual graces. The showers appear on the earth. We are refreshed in worship: it is the time of the singing of the birds. We rejoice in fruitfulness: the fig tree puts forth her green figs. We are made glad by the advance of new converts. The vines put forth their tender grapes and give a good fragrance. As the turtle dove gives expression to the congenial blessings of Spring so the Church sounds forth her praise and joy during seasons of spiritual awakening.

Such times are absolutely ideal for rich enjoyment of personal communion with Christ, affording an excellent opportunity for rapid advance and establishment in the spiritual life. Hence his invitation at such times: *Arise, my love, my fair one and come away. O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely* (2:13,14).

What better incentive to partake of communion could we receive than such expressions of encouragement? Enjoyment of communion with

Christ during times of spiritual refreshment in the church is the nearest experience to heaven that we are likely to have on earth.

Communion in private

In contrast to the enjoyment of Christ as he appears among his people in the sanctuary of worship we turn now to the subject of private meditation and communion. This time the invitation comes from the Christian to the Lord, *Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves* (7:11,12). The picture is one of the fervent believer getting up early in order to enjoy the refreshment of daybreak and the exhilarating freshness and fragrance of the vineyards. Oriental vineyards were not only noted for the value of their vines but for their layout and beauty. The trees included pomegranates and camphire trees with their lovely dense soft yellow-white blossoms (1:14). The enjoyment of Christ's company is sought in retirement away from distractions. The thought again is of communion or sharing the pleasure of the vineyards and the pleasant trees within it.

More protracted times are also sought, not just an hour before a busy schedule full of responsibilities but a few days away in a desert place alone, to lodge in vine villages where scenic beauty and tranquillity will help communion. All kinds of spiritual matters of a profitable nature await to be shared and uppermost of all is the desire to express gratitude and worship for so great a redemption.

It is not boastfulness but rather sincere gratitude and genuine love of heart that causes the bride to say, *the mandrakes give a smell.* The perfume and savouriness of the spring season illustrate the spiritual fruitfulness overflowing in the soul, *at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for Thee, O my beloved.* Not only well known fruits such as the pomegranate but lesser known, rare and valuable fruits are to be enjoyed. Well known truths never decline in value, but there are new insights and new appreciations to be shared. The enjoyment of Christ alone early in the vineyards and the pleasure of his company away for a few days, if that is possible, those are some of the treasures of the Christian life.

Communion in the night watches

Should the circumstances of life forbid luxuries like a holiday given over to spiritual reflection, and should some find their physical situation to be the extreme opposite of the rural glories of an oriental sunny climate as portrayed in the Song, they should remember that ultimately these are only pictures conveying vital spiritual realities. A Siberian prison camp, a dark cold cell, a bed of sickness, a hospital ward for cases of terminal

disease—such adverse conditions cannot banish Christ from the souls of believers. The night of pain may be long, the bed of suffering protracted, but Christ's presence makes the heaviness lighter and the burden less, for he is *as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.* For the perfume and beauty the camphire clusters were greatly valued as were the bundles of myrrh which were placed by women between their breasts. *A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts* (1:13). The sense conveyed is one of Christ's presence. He is present through the long night watches with his enablement and comfort to refresh the soul. Communion can consist of sharing subjects, sometimes complex subjects, with the Lord. But communion can also be just resting and relaxing in the knowledge that he will never leave us nor forsake us.

Enjoyment of Christ in all situations: in the assembly of the sanctuary, early in the vineyards, away in the villages or in the night-watches—this is all part of the rich legacy of every believer's experience.

1. The interpretation of the Song

F. Godet provides an interpretation of the Song in *Classical Evangelical Essays in Old Testament Interpretation,* compiled and edited by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. This interpretation fails to do justice to allegory found in Scripture itself and misses completely the glory of that love which is illustrated between Christ and his Church. The historical background concerning the relationship between Solomon and the Shulamite maiden (8:7) is made primary and the whole interpretation made by Godet to rest on that. This surely is incidental and not the primary question. The Holy Spirit would have us preoccupied with the purpose and interpretation of the book as it finds its place within the whole context of Scripture. The providential details of how it came to be written are not unimportant but we can only speculate about that and never be certain about it. But we can use the whole Bible to interpret The Song, Psalm 45, Isaiah 54, Ephesians 5:21-33 and Revelation 21:1-3 are particularly relevant.

2. Commentaries on the Song

John Gill is most helpful. He divides every text in a clear style using further subdivisions where needed. Where two interpretations seem possible he expounds both in full indicating his preference, with reasons. His hyper-Calvinism does not appear except in the last chapter on 8:8 where he speaks of the 'elect of God un-called'. We should be concerned, he declares, for all such—not, mark well, for the world, but for the 'elect of God un-called'. John 3:16 would then read, 'for God so loved the *elect of God un-called* that he gave his only begotten son etc.'. But we are concerned for our unconverted relatives and friends and for the world. Not knowing who the elect are we pray for and work toward the conversion of them all. God beseeches all those unreconciled to himself to be reconciled, irrespective of the fact that he knows who will be reconciled (2 Cor. 5:20).

James Durham is next by way of priority. His commentary is not likely to be available to most since the first edition, dated 1669, is very rare. Carey Publications have begun the work of editing Durham for a reprint. A. Moody-Stuart on the Song is a very useful book being full, satisfying and exegetically sensitive and reliable. The last edition is dated 1860 and it would be good to see this volume in print again. Matthew Henry, as we would expect, is first class. Useful, but less so than Gill, Durham or Moody-Stuart is George Burrowe's commentary on the Song. Although very brief, Jamieson, Fauset and Brown is well worth consulting.

Conference Reports

Fifth Carey Family Conference—Pilgrim Hall

Edifying and fruitful discussion sessions featured among the blessings of the conference gathering at Pilgrim Hall this year. Full congregations met in the evenings to hear Bill Payne of Burlington, Ontario, expound on the attributes of God. After introducing the subject in general he expounded in particular on the attributes of holiness, omnipotence, immutability and love. Douglas Jones' paper on Child Conversion paved the way for a stimulating debate in which it was clearly seen that the only difference between children and adults is the level of understanding and hence of presentation. Their need of regeneration is identical with that of adults. Identification of them as a separate group is based alone on intake ability. In addition to the above-mentioned topics, tapes or cassettes are available by writing to Peter Dixon, 73 Pasture Hill Road, Haywards Heath as follows: Prayer—its difficulties and delights by Bernard Honeysett. Who are the Baptists? and The motives for Evangelism, both by Erroll Hulse.

Sixth Carey Family Conference—Clarendon School

Very different in flavour and atmosphere the first Carey Family Conference in the Midlands was very encouraging for many reasons. The representation from a wide area of the country was one factor and the high proportion of gifted young people especially young men was another. The appetite for expository material was tremendous. The venue proved ideal for afternoon recreational competitive activities, cricket, soccer, tennis, table-tennis and a swimming gala being included in the programme. Visitors from the area round about attended the evening sessions which were devoted to the subject of Christian virtues. The formidable task of providing all meals and catering in general was undertaken by the Bedford Evangelical Church where John Rubens the conference organiser is now a member. Rod Mayhew managed to overcome the acoustical problems of the large hall and tapes or cassettes are available from Peter Dixon as follows: The Family and Discipline by David Kingdon: Church Membership and its Importance by Bill Payne: A Christ Honouring Marriage by David Kingdon: Role of Baptists in American Revolution by David Straub: 'John Bunyan' by Colin Richards: Personal Evangelism; Erroll Hulse: Joy; Colin Richards: Faith; Bill Payne: Patience; David Kingdon: Humility; David Straub: Zeal; Erroll Hulse.

Reformed Conference in South Africa

The annual Evangelical and Reformed Studies Conference at Skoeghiem in Natal was attended by an increased number of Black pastors including one from Soweto, the scene only two weeks previously of terrible tragedy and unrest.

The general theme of the conference was the subject of the Holy Spirit. The visiting speaker, Dr. Effion Evans, gave two much appreciated papers on revival, biblically and historically considered, and one on the great Welsh preacher Daniel Rowland. Clive Tyler, vice principal of the Bible Institute of South Africa, treated the conference to a stimulating paper on John Moffatt, surely one of the great missionary pioneers of all time. A number of the issues raised by him were vigorously discussed in two sessions to which the Black pastors made notable contributions, especially in pointing out how much White paternalism is still in evidence in missionary work in South Africa.

Other papers were devoted to the Holy Spirit and Scripture (John Newby), the Holy Spirit and Regeneration (David Kingdon), the Holy Spirit and Assurance (also David Kingdon), the Holy Spirit and Sanctification (Dr. Robin Wells) and the Unity created by the Holy Spirit in the Church (Erroll Hulse).

Among the Books

Those who have come by experience to esteem the Puritan writings will be delighted with the handsome, new Banner of Truth edition of *The Works of Robert Traill*, the original four volumes in two at £3.50 each, which adds up to 1,114 pages for £7.00! The exposition with the title, 'By what means may ministers best win souls', is absolutely first rate! Could it all be as good as that? Without reservation the answer is in the affirmative. If you enjoy pure exposition with generous helpings of application you will not be disappointed. As an example let us take up the problem of the unregenerate and prayer. If the unregenerate can do nothing of spiritual value does it not follow that their impasse is hopeless? Does not their condition suggest that they should not attempt prayer? Traill answers that such inferences are bad! He expounds four reasons why the graceless should come to the throne of grace. Magnificent exposition! See volume 1, page 154ff.

An unusual and extremely valuable contribution by the Puritans has been made available (again by The Banner) in the form of a collection of Puritan prayers. *The Valley of Vision* (223 pages paperback, £1.50) is meant as an aid to private devotions but the quality and breadth of material is such that it provokes ministers (or should provoke them) to think of the poverty of their public prayers. How few men pray as well as they preach!

Providing the *Valley of Vision* is not imitated or read aloud as public prayer it is very stimulating and is a reminder that public prayer should be spiritual, varied, comprehensive, pithy and to the point. The average man at prayer may have your whole attention if he prays feelingly, sensibly and eloquently for about five minutes. If he goes on for longer he runs the risk of losing your attention as your mind wanders off and if longer than ten minutes this may arouse resentful and aggressive feelings, the whole exercise turning from credit to debit. *The Valley of Vision* is an example of how much can be said in a few sentences where adequate prayer, meditation and preparation has preceded the exercise. The golden rule of course is always to pray to God alone and not to the people with a desire to please the ears of men.

There is news from The Baptist Book Trust, Box 57, Otisville, Michigan, USA 48463 that Bishop Hall's contemplations have been made available, two volumes in one, 632 pages, $7 including postage. Also Armitages, *History of the Baptists* at $15.00.

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